United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Papua New Guinea, Armenia, Fiji, Botswana, Dominican Republic, Afghanistan, Zaire, Bahamas and Haiti among speakers in the general debate today.

+ Comoros, Oman, Costa Rica, Antigua and Barbuda, and Central African Republic among speakers in general debate on Friday.

+ Under-Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Special Representative Jonathan Howe attend inauguration of Somalia's second Regional Council in Bakool; UNOSOM II continues efforts to establish Councils throughout country.

+ Secretary-General appoints Vladimir Petrovsky as Secretary-General of, and Personal Representative to, Conference on Disarmament, on iterim basis; Abdelkader Bensmail to be Deputy Secretary-General; both appointments effective 5 December.

+ Secretary-General says mandate of United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia has been invalidated by fighting in Abhkazia, but proposes to keep observers in Sukhumi; WHO begins emergency airlift of food to thousands displaced by fighting.

+ United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa condemns raid by South African Defence Force in Umtata, Transkei, last Thursday which resulted in deaths of several young people.

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John Kaputin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, told the General Assembly today that the proposed United Nations initiative on opportunity and development, which was on the agenda for the current session, was important to his country as opportunity and participation were among the national goals and principles in its Constitution. It was also important to other developing countries where increasing opportunity for citizens was an official aim, especially to countries whose economies were in transition. Papua New Guinea had recently been enjoying an unprecedented rate of economic

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growth and it was necessary to address the question of distribution so that people could benefit by taking part in that growth.

Increasing opportunity and participation was a universal goal, he continued. It was vital to address the issue comprehensively and systematically because of several features of the current international situation: the difficult, and often worsening, circumstances of many developing countries; the problems of economies in transition; and the tendency among economic policy-makers to reduce the economic role of the State and to leave questions of access and distribution to the market. He proposed the establishment of a small panel of distinguished and expert persons, broadly representative of the international community, to increase opportunity and participation, with particular reference to developing countries. It should produce recommendations for practical action rather than an academic study. Above all, it should examine the best way to link opportunity, via effective access, to participation, he said.

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Vahan Papazian, the Foreign Minister of Armenia, this morning told the General Assembly that now more than ever it was encumbent upon the United Nations to examine its policy of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Member States and to define more stringently the impact of a conflict on other nations' peace and security. He supported the idea that the "near-moribund" Trusteeship Council be transformed into a modern "clearinghouse for self-determination". Under the system being discussed in academic circles, a "trust territory" would be part of a Member State voluntarily placed into trusteeship by the Government of that State, with the aim of resolving a claim of self-determination under United Nations supervision without prejudicing the territory's final status.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, he continued, had cost more than 10,000 lives and uprooted almost a million people in the past five years. Armenia's position on the conflict had been clear and consistent from the first day -- it was between the people of the region, who were striving for self-determination, and the Azerbaijani Government, which was refusing to address their concerns about their rights and security. Recent developments were promising, he said, with direct talks taking place between the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijani authorities, mediated by the Russian Federation. The cease-fire brought about in that forum had held for over a month now, an achievement unprecedented in the past five years, he said.

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Ratu Manasa Seniloli, Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, today told the General Assembly that his country and the other members of the South Pacific Forum was concerned about the issue of nuclear testing. The Forum welcomed last month the commitment by France, the United Kingdom and the United States to the early negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty. He noted a lack of effective international rules for nuclear liability, and said members of the Forum attached great importance to

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the question of an enhanced international regime to cover possible transboundary damage arising from "peaceful nuclear activity". Members had agreed to participate on the ongoing deliberations of the Standing Committee on Nuclear Liability convened by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and to support the establishment of a comprehensive international legal regime dealing with liability for nuclear damage.

He went on to say that a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks was vital to economic growth and prosperity. Developing countries lost an estimated $100 billion in export revenues each year as a result of market barriers in industrialized countries -- about twice the official development assistance provided by those countries, he noted.

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The Foreign Minister of Botswana, Gaositwe K.T. Chiepe, said in the general debate this morning that the United Nations was reported to be spending roughly three times more on peace-keeping and peacemaking than on development assistance. Problems of development, she stressed, constituted the underlying cause of world conflicts. For the United Nations to be effective in the maintenance of international peace more energy and resources had to be expended on development activities. She said that for an effective process of development to get underway in Africa, the international community needed to establish a more open trading system and to give access to and adequate compensation for commodities produced in the continent.

She said the decision made by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 29 September calling for the lifting of economic sanctions against South Africa was a momentous move. It had been taken in the ardent belief and hope that "we are truly approaching an historic watershed in the blood-stained history of Southern Africa - the end at last of the long nightmare of apartheid". However, she reiterated, freedom had not yet arrived, given the terrible violence ravaging the townships and the boycott of negotiations by some parties. She said the people of South Africa would need "our determined companionship" as they walked the last, and possibly most difficult, mile in their journey to the new South Africa.

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Juan Arístides Taveras Guzman, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, told the General Assembly today that in his part of America there was a shift towards settling disputes by negotiation, notably in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. The return to democracy in Guatemala augured well for the process of institutionalizing peace and prosperity in the region, he said. Meanwhile, efforts were being made to reestablish constitutional order in Haiti through negotiations under the aegis of the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS). He appealed to the international community to help stabilize the democratic regime in that country and to aid its economic development. Haitian Prime Minister Robert Malval had recently visited the Dominican Republic with a view to normalizing

relations between the two countries, and an agreement providing for real reciprocal cooperation had been concluded, he noted.

The Dominican Republic believed in the univerality of human rights, he continued. Neither geographic, economic, social, religious nor cultural differences could be used as a pretext for human rights abuses. He expressed concern about the return to extreme nationalism in certain parts of the world, and the destruction caused by racial and cultural hatred, notably in the former Yugoslavia. The Dominican Republic hoped for a swift solution to the situation there, and supported relevant Security Council measures, particularly the establishment of an international criminal court to judge crimes against humanity.

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Afghanistan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hedayat Amin Arsala, told the General Assembly today that the Afghan people felt that the changes that had taken place in the world were partly the result of the enormous sacfrifices they had made during the 14 years of struggle against Soviet occupation and communist rule. That gave them a special stake in ensuring that the choices made by the international community were the right ones and that they would share fully in the resulting benefits. He outlined the scope of destruction in Afghanistan and highlighted a few areas in which international assistance was particularly needed, including the struggle against drug cultivation and trafficking and the clearing of mines, which were currently killing an average of 300 people a month.

Afghanistan was distressed by the recent upheaval in Tajikstan, he said. It had made every effort to ensure that tensions along the Tajik-Afghan border were reduced, and high-level visits between the two countries had resulted in mutual understanding on important issues. He welcomed the decision by the Tajik authorities to solve their internal political problems through negotiations, so that the Tajik refugees in Afghanistan could return home with confidence. To that end, he said, his country was planning to reach a trilateral agreement with Tajikistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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Mpinga Kasenda, the Foreign Minister of Zaire, said in the general debate this afternoon that in an atmosphere of political crisis, the protection of human rights became very difficult and subject to suspicion. The establishment of the State's authority was often identified with constraint and, at worst, with arbitrary action, although a country could not possibly become involved in development without order and collective discipline. The process of democratization was irreversible in Zaire, he stated, and no one was thinking of re-establishing the old order. Everyone aspired to change and to the establishment of law. The question at present was how to carry out that change in a peaceful manner.

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For now, he continued, Zaire was asking the international community - particularly those countries which believed they had a mandate to administer the country -- to let its citizens settle their own problems. Each time they had found themselves without foreign interference, they had managed to overcome their antagonisms. They therefore urged their usual partners to help them overcome the present crisis, instead of dividing them by canonising some and denouncing others. He said countries that regarded themselves as champions of democracy thus had the opportunity of supporting the organisation of free and transparent elections in Zaire, rather than proposing undemocratic plans which brought to power people who did not have the support of the people.

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Orville Turnquest, Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney-General and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas, said today that the forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations would provide an opportunity to assess how Member States could fulfil the principles of the Charter. The Organization had achieved many successes, including the fostering of democracy in Eastern Europe, the reduction of nuclear weapons, the establishment of the war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the repelling of aggression and the restoration of sovereignty in Kuwait. He stressed the importance of the Organization's role in the economic and social fields, and called attention to next year's World Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In many countries, including the Bahamas, social tensions were reordering national priorities, he continued. He urged a "return to basics" in dealing with problems of a pandemic nature such as poverty, illicit drugs, crime, violence, international terrorism, human rights violations and disease, especially acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Member States were facing the disintegration of traditional values coupled with rampant unemployment. It was necessary to re-emphasize those spiritual values which respected life and the dignity and worth of the human person. He went on to say that his country was an ideal setting for difficult negotiations and offered its facilities to the United Nations for the conduct of its affairs.

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Claudette Werleigh, Haiti's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship, told the General Assembly today that for two years the Haitian people had been waging a constant struggle for the restoration of democracy and for respect for the fundamental rights stolen by the coup d'etat in 1991. Today, with the decisive help of the United Nations, Haiti was about to turn a new page in its history. She thanked Danté Caputo, Special Envoy of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), for his "inestimable work" in that regard. The Governors Island Agreement signed in July had set the modalities for the restoration of constitutional order and democracy in Haiti.

A new Prime Minister had taken office in August and a "Government of harmony" had been established, she continued. The economic measures adopted

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by the Security Council had been suspended and would be fully lifted at the end of the transformation process. The United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) was already being deployed. Other steps remained to be taken before 30 October, when the democratically-elected President, Jean-Bertrand Arisitide, would return. She condemned the recent violence in Haiti, which clearly jeopardized the success of the Governors Island Agreement. Just a few hours earlier, armed groups had demonstrated against the arrival of the United Nations Mission. She appealed to the international community to maintain pressure so that the minority forces who opposed democracy would find themselves completely isolated and would have no alternative but to accept dialogue and reconciliation. The support of the international community would make it possible for constitutional order to be restored in Haiti, she said.

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Mouslim Ben Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Comoros, told the General Assembly on Friday that it was time for the international community to hold a conference of reconciliation aimed at ending the war in Somalia. He also appealed to the people of Mozambique, Angola and Liberia to take stock of the consequences of the conflict in those countries. He went on to say that the United Nations should give priority to programmes that promoted sustainable development in view of the relationship between environment and development. He also stressed the importance of human rights programmes; since human rights could not be separated from the concept of democracy, the Organization must take action to promote the democratic process.

The young democracy of Comoros was still in a state of transition, the Foreign Minister continued. Such an enterprise required assistance from countries that loved peace and progress. Regarding the Comorian island of Mayotte, he said his country was willing to engage in dialogue with the Government of France to resolve the matter. A new impetus must be given to efforts to enable the countries of the South to extricate themselves from chaos. At the same time, an awareness of the need for self-reliance had promoted the use of regional organizations. South-South cooperation could be an important factor in global economic relations, he said.

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Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Oman's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, told the General Assembly on Friday that a lot of work lay ahead for the United Nations and its organs in pursuing and preserving the peace agreement agreement between the peoples of Israel and Palestine. The agreement paved the way for other agreements between the Arabs and Israel. However, many issues would have to be resolved before a comprehensive settlement to the problems of the Middle East could be achieved. He called on all Member States to support the peace process. Regional cooperation for economic and social development remained a prerequisite for building a new system in the Middle East, he said. It was also important to remember the urgent need of the Lebanese people and to assist them in rebuilding their economic and social infrastructures.

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Oman had given priority to the promotion of youth programmes in its developmental, social and economic plans, he went on to say. A report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in September 1993 stated that Oman ranked first among Middle East and North African countries, and second worldwide, in the reduction of the infant mortality rate in the age group of five and below. Oman ranked first in the same group in vaccinating against chicken pox. In addition, 91 per cent of five-year-old children were attending elementary school, a figure which exceeded regional and international averages. While continuing to focus on youth, Oman was also working on environmental conservation for the sake of the next generation. The country had recently become a signatory to the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol for ozone-layer protection, he noted.

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Bernd Niehaus-Quesada, Costa Rica's Minister of Foreign Affairs, told the General Assembly on Friday that while Israelis and Palestinians shook hands and demonstrated their good judgement, the tragedy of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to shame the world. The people of Asia, Africa and Latin America remained forgotten and marginalized and the dialogue between the North and South had been reduced to a rhetorical exercise. "What does new peace represent for the countries of the third world? " he asked. "The assurance that its children will not die under bullets, but will continue to die of hunger and of endemic diseases?"

The Foreign Minister went on to invite the members of the European Community and the producer countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to enter into a political dialogue to complement the legal agreements of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Such talks should recognize the rights of Latin American countries to sell their fruit in the common markets. While democracy was attempting to grow roots in Central America, the markets for its products in developed countries were becoming increasingly restricted and inexplicably severe attitudes had been adopted in financial negotiations. When Central America had been a region of violence, it had never been dealt with in such a way. The international community's support was indispensable if the region was to make a transition to peace, liberty and democracy, he said.

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Lionel Alexander Hurst, Chairman of Antigua and Barbuda's Delegation, said in the General Assembly on Friday that the 33 States of the Latin American and Caribbean region had quietly made tremendous strides to strengthen the bonds of cooperation and friendship. During the past year, the regional group of States had worked together to find a solution to the Haitian crisis. Brazil and Venezuela, as members of the Security Council, had made every attempt to include the entire region in the Council's decision-making process on Haiti. The peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean eagerly awaited the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti on 30

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October. No previous Security Council embargo intended to compel compliance with the will of the international community had been as swiftly effective as the embargo against the illegitimate regime in Haiti, he said.

The First Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States to be convened in Barbados would be the first test of the will of the international community since last year's United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Mr. Hurst continued. Development based on the developed world's current model of consumption, distribution and disposal was unsustainable, he stressed. Small island States were not contributing to climate change, global warming or rising sea levels, yet their existence was at stake. The Barbados Conference would articulate a programme of action to prevent those looming catastrophes and to achieve sustainable development in small island developing States, he said.

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Jean-Marie Bassia, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, told the General Assembly on Friday that the situation of the Republic of China in Taiwan should be reconsidered. The immense progress it had made in political, economic and social issues should allow it to contribute to international cooperation and participate in the activities of the United Nations. More and more States were determined to follow the Organization's principles. The desire for cooperation displayed in South Africa was also needed in the former Yugoslavia, Western Sahara, Angola and Somalia, he added.

Real solidarity should also be cultivated between developed and developing countries, especially African countries, the Foreign Minister continued. The economic situation there had deteriorated, and cooperation by the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and world economic institutions was needed. The Central African Republic was in the process of democratization and deserved international support. The time had come to bring about democratization in the United Nations, especially with respect to the Security Council, which must be adapted to new world realities. Technology had reduced the world to a global village, he went on to say, and there was a need to promote human rights and peace.

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Under-Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Affairs Kofi Annan, Special Representative Jonathan Howe and other officials of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) today attended the inauguration of the Bakool Regional Council -- the second Regional Council to be established in Somalia. The first Council was inaugurated at Garowe on Saturday.

The formation of Somalia's first two Regional Councils is a significant advance towards establishing representative self-government for the people of Somalia, and follows months of consultations between United Nations officials and local representatives, according to a spokesman for the Organization. UNOSOM II is actively engaged in efforts to help establish District and

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Regional Councils throughout Somalia, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Agreement on national reconciliation.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed Vladimir Petrovsky, Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, to be Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and to act as his Personal Representative to the Conference, on an interim basis, with effect from 5 December, a United Nations spokesman said today. Mr. Petrovsky will carry out those functions concurrently with his present function.

The Secretary-General appointed Abdelkader Bensmail, Chief of the Geneva Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, as Deputy Secretary-General of the Disarmament Conference, also with effect from 5 December.

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The general breakdown in the cease-fire in Abhkazia has invalidated the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in a report dated 7 October. However, he proposes to maintain UNOMIG's strength in Sukhumi, which has been captured by Abhkaz separatist forces. He said the presence of UNOMIG's four military observers and four civilians would ensure that pertinent information was available "from the ground" when he formulated his recommendations to the Security Council on the future role and status of the mission. The Chief Military Observer had already established contact with Abhkaz military and civil officials, and they had assured him of their cooperation.

The Secretary-General said that he would soon be consulting with the parties to the conflict and with the Russian Federation, to determine how best the United Nations could assist in bringing about a comprehensive political settlement. He said he hoped to be able to present recommendations in that regard, and on the future of UNOMIG, to the Council within two weeks or so.

When UNOMIG was established by the Council on 24 August, it was mandated to monitor the existing cease-fire with special attention to the situation in Sukhumi. Extension of the initial three-month mandate was to be dependent on substantive progress towards lasting peace.

In a related development, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that it had started an emergency airlift of food into Georgia on Friday to help the tens of thousands of people displaced by the fighting and in dire need of shelter and food. In his report on Abhkazia, Mr. Boutros-Ghali mentioned the urgent call for help made by Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze, and reiterated the appeal made by the Department of Humanitarain Affairs asking particularly for food, warm clothing, medical supplies and logistic support for the transport of the relief supplies.

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The United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) and the Observer Missions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the British Commonwealth have strongly condemned the raid by a unit of the South African Defence Force on a house in Umtata, Transkei, last Thursday. In a statement issued today, UNOMSA said the raid had resulted in the brutal killing of innocent children and young people, and deplored the fact that it had been authorised by the highest levels of the South African Government.

The statement underlined the fact that the raid had taken place the day before the 184 Member States of the General Assembly decided to lift economic sanctions against South Africa, thus indicating their readiness to accept that country back "into the family of nations".

At a meeting at Headquarters today held to observe the International Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners, Tebogo Mafole of the African National Congress said that the issue of political prisoners and of continuing political violence were lingering obstacles to the transition underway in South Africa. He told the Special Committee Against Apartheid that 86 such prisoners were presently awaiting release. He also called for the strengthening of the United Nations Observer Mission in the country.

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